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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

With which is incorporated "THE MUSICAL REVIEW."
JULY 1st, 1852.

From the "MUSICAL REVIEW," June, 1852.

It is with no little gratification that we are enabled to announce to our readers that our efforts to advance the musical cause will shortly be more enlarged in their sphere, and we hope more extended in their usefulness, the Proprietor of this Review having effected an arrangement for its publication in conjunction with our highly respectable contemporary the *Musical Times*.

In making this announcement, the Editor has the pleasure to state that he has entered into an engagement with the Proprietor of the joint publication, "THE MUSICAL TIMES AND MUSICAL REVIEW," and that his energies will henceforth be devoted to the encouragement of the musical art, and to the advocacy of the interests of its professors, in a more comprehensive sphere. The critical part of the paper is placed under his immediate superintendence, and his engagement includes the furnishing for the publication articles that may, it is hoped, have the effect of placing the musical professor on a better footing with the public, and of removing some of the stumbling-blocks which are now so frequently placed in the path of the musical amateur. That by the new arrangement he will be enabled more effectually to do this, appears to him quite certain. The very extensive circulation of the *Musical Times* amongst the general public, and educational as well as literary and scientific institutions, affords every facility for effecting this; and it is not too much to say that the issue of the joint musical journal, which will appear on the 1st of July, will exceed by many thousands the number ever printed of any other periodical of the kind in this country—thus offering to the professor a sure means of bringing his efforts before a very large class of the community. Nor ought he to neglect to impress this fact upon the attention of advertisers, who will readily see how great must be the advantage of making their announcement in the columns of the *Musical Times and Musical Review*.

The Editor would fain say a few words—and those of a congratulatory kind—to the subscribers to the journal which is now before them in its present shape for the last time: he would thank them for the support which he, single-handed for many years, has received—that support emanating, as it has done, from the very highest members of the profession, both as composers and executants—for there is, we honestly assure our readers, scarcely a name of any eminence in the profession that is not enrolled amongst our regular subscribers. It is therefore a source of gratification to the Editor—a privilege, indeed—that while he will have an opportunity of periodically meeting his friends, he will, by the increased publicity given to his efforts, have more certain means of advancing their interests in an open, fair, and legitimate way. He therefore sincerely congratulates the subscribers on the change, feeling that their ideas will sympathise with his own in the matter, and that they will not fail to give him that support in his new position for which he now deems it a positive duty to offer them his most grateful acknowledgements.

The articles from the pen of the Editor of this Review will in future be signed "VERNON."

ENGLISH GLEE & MADRIGAL COMPOSERS.

No. VII.

Contributed by E. HOLMES, Author of the "Life of Mozart."

OUR last paper on the subject of glee composition, proposed these unaccompanied pieces, as a simple and obvious test of the proficiency of the ear and voice, at a time when singing is carried on in crowds, and everywhere with too much help. It is the best practical purpose to which we can turn a great quantity of music of English growth, and character, bequeathed to us chiefly by the industry of the last century.

But even in the glee era, the want of some variety, offering a new stimulus to the attention was felt; and Mr. Attwood, and Sir John Stevenson, gave a temporary attraction and popularity to some of their productions, by adding to them a double accompaniment for the pianoforte. These things at the old dinners of the Harmonists at the *Albion* used to have their effect, the judgment of the audience being probably obscured by the mist of good cheer, and their benevolence wholly surrendered to the genial occasion. Now in temperate mood, and at a distance of time, we should regard such triumphs as cheap. In the last period of our Ancient Concerts, Mr. Greateorex introduced the harmonized air; which is the last variety of the glee we can recollect. The pen of English composers in this style has long been inactive, and our latest unaccompanied productions have been rather allied in form to the 'part song' of Germany than to any native model.

No composition can be thoroughly or justly estimated, except by looking to the time of its production, and to the circumstances of the art which then surrounded it. If we insist that a composition made half a century ago, in the infancy of the discovery of musical effect, shall now maintain its place by the side of any thing that is at present known, and executed, we commit injustice, and must condemn many meritorious composers to oblivion. It is sufficient to have filled a place well, and to have supplied a want at any period of the progress of music, to deserve a degree of approbation at all times.

And this is the utmost that human ambition can propose to itself. For the progress of the art not only introduces new things to our admiration, but instills into our faculties new desires and a higher standard of gratification. If it be a question among the greatest masters, which of them shall longest and most stoutly maintain prominence in public estimation amidst every thing new and extraordinary that the course of years may produce, we must perforce lose all interest in the merits of minor musicians, unless we remove their productions into a peculiar light, and especially that of their age. By this fair method of appreciation, we give to composers

who are sometimes indiscreetly brought before the public, in mixed concerts, their due meed of approval, and may even properly estimate a psalm tune or a chant.

In illustration of the adage, "the times are changed, and we in them," Burney remarks—"I have never yet known a singer able to satisfy the expectation of old critics in old songs. If the hearer is free from prejudice, he is a more severe judge, and more difficult to please, than in his youth; but possession of favour once taken, no singer, however superior his talents, can obtain a fair hearing." It is difficult to renew the early impressions of enthusiasm; but when we find a deficiency, is it not rather our own improvement, (if we may so term a critical and exceptionous nicety in admitting pleasure) which is to blame, rather than the music or the performers? The old nobleman in *Gil Blas*, who declares that "the peaches now are very different and very inferior to what they were in his boyhood," forgets how much his palate has been dulled by age and habit. Rossini has satirised the same common senile propensity in his *Barber of Seville*. The guardian of the fair *Rosina* cannot sit and be shaved quietly during her music lesson, without ludicrously exhibiting what he conceives to be the true style of the *cantabile* in trembling tones of antiquated tenderness. The lively recollections of his youth overpower him, and he forgets while singing that his face is covered with lather, and that a napkin invests his shoulders. There is something pathetic, mingled with the humorous, in this impulsive exhibition of Dr. Bartolo.

The whole aim and object of a musical life is to preserve the first pleasures in all their glow and vivacity; and the impossibility of accomplishing this while years and experience make us constantly more difficult to please, infuses sometimes an unhappy acerbity into many a well-disposed and harmonious nature. None are more tried in this respect than those who have to hear music in order to write about and to criticise it. Their best productions are, generally, but faint reflections of their own pleasure; but when pleasure has been wanting, the benevolence and conscientiousness of the critic are placed in collision.

In the course of the late season of morning concerts, we heard one of the best glees of Webbe, which we had not heard for thirty years before, when it was performed by the Vaughans, Knyvetts, &c., at a concert given by a Miss Bonwick, at the London Tavern. On this last occasion the singers were also of first-rate ability and experience; but the result was entirely different; all that we had once admired, seemed omitted. The *pianissimo* aimed at was so extremely fine as to be scarcely audible, except from a disagreeable prominence of the tenor, who was flat at the same time. But the fault was not altogether in the music or the performance; it was rather in

changed times and tastes. In former years a glee well sung took its place among things of the same calibre, and pleased where moderate pleasure was expected; but for the same reason it cannot now be enjoyed amidst the polished instrumental music of Mozart and Mendelssohn. On the other hand, the admirers as well as the performers of this music will always form a remarkable minority, and notwithstanding the inconstancy and fluctuation of taste, the history of the art is only tolerably uniform in this—that the few are always attracted by that which is difficult, scientific, and uncommon.

Probably there may yet be a reason beyond the fastidiousness of old association, which has prevented the glee, as lately exhibited by professional singers in London, from realizing the same effect as in olden times. The alto part, which is intended for the counter-tenor voices of men, has been committed to ladies, who, however fine their tone, produce quite a different effect:—such a difference, in fact, as may be observed when the same note is sustained by the high note of one voice, and the low or medium tone of another. There resides a power of expression in the fine alto voice of a man who knows how to use it, which for certain purposes of music and especially for the part appropriated to it in glees, cannot be replaced through any other source.

But if the glee is somewhat changed in public concerts, it is still carried on with great zeal in amateur societies and clubs, by performers whose names are little known beyond their own circle. There is a sort of traditional and hereditary excellence in the performance of this music, which causes it to spring up in great perfection in surprising and unexpected places; and the old fire and effect which seem spent and decayed in the singers of better music, here survive. But that which must long preserve the glee in great vigour, is its connection with our old English habit of dining together—and then this is the only secular *business* music upon which the chairman, and the committee who arranged the toasts, and the director of the singers, may well sit in conclave. If we chair a new member, triumph in purity of election, or get a tax repealed, we usually celebrate the event by a dinner, but our toasts must be crowned with music or the viands will want their flavour, the speeches sound insipid, and the life of the assembly never attain the true point of exhilaration. The titles of glees are so ingeniously framed as to meet every variety of political and sentimental allusion. A king, a queen, a hero or any other great personage, can be fitted with a suit of appropriate compliments in a quarter of an hour, by consulting the catalogue of them, which, like Moses' shop, is full of all sorts of ready-made goods, capable of a little stretching and contrivance, of a very general and graceful accommodation. "There is nothing,"

says Fielding, "which a man parts with so unwillingly as his praise"—however, at our dinners in honour of individuals, when once the ice is broken and we begin to compliment, we do the thing well.

It was a great advance in civilization when the Corporation of London extinguished their half-starved poet, and stopped the senseless noise of the city waits, to make room at their banquets for that able body of men, "great, glorious, and free," whom in former days we used to know as the "dinner singers." Whether they began with money under their plates for the first course, to encourage in them a double flow of animal spirits from the thoughts of good cheer present and prospective, we can hardly tell; but such was certainly the handsome old English practice in paying musicians of Mr. Commissioner Whitelock, in the time of Charles I. However, as every good institution is liable to abuse, this one of dinner singing became injurious to the performers who monopolized it: disregarding Milton's advice with respect to feasts, and not sparing 'to interpose them oft'—but living constantly in the sunshine and shade of bottles and tureens, their figures lost the line of beauty entirely, and their health declined long before the usual term.

Singing is the only kind of music that is not merely uninjured, but is absolutely improved by moderate banqueting. The after dinner-hour is very unfavourable to players; few like to encounter it, and fewer do themselves any credit in it. However temperate a man may be, he finds a relaxation of his nervous energy at this time, which disqualifies him for his usual command—and the best instrumental artists find it prudent to reserve themselves. The singer is never more himself than on the removal of the cloth; he is not in the least troubled with nervous fears and apprehensions, but prompt, and ready for action.

Of all the agreeable treats ever dispensed to the musical public of London, none in our recollection ever surpassed the old anniversaries of the Madrigal Society, instituted by the late Sir John Rogers. We speak of these as past, though still maintained with spirit under the presidency of Lord Saltoun, and by the Western Madrigalians, because death has severed many of the connections and strong associations of musical pleasure, which we used to have with these celebrations in their outset. The impression received was that musicians alone were capable of carrying conviviality to its height. It was a pleasant contrast, when, in the murkiest season of a London January, with fog, frost, and snow without, the well-warmed rooms of *Freemasons'* received us, and a legion of gliding waiters inducted us into the old English art of making ourselves comfortable. Musicians who do not eat their terms like lawyers, and who are only seen in public in their

profession, and at long intervals of time, become in the minds of each other very strange abstractions, until an occasion of this sort jostles them together, and brings out their humanity. It gives a pleasant sensation to look round a large and well-filled room, and see a set of people who for one evening at least have tolerably excluded the cares and vexations of life. It is odd to see the baton giving place to the soup-ladle, to see a symphonist carving bacon, or a contrapuntist deep in a draught of the orthodox—each laying aside the claims of his own particular genius to act as becomes the genus *homo*. These were the prevailing sights, and they had a moral effect; they softened prejudices, and opened a common ground of sympathy. Before coffee time the faces universally shone with the restorative effects of music and good cheer, and with the sense of an entertainment which the generous host seemed to think well worthy of the trouble and expense of getting up.

The history of madrigals and glees from the time that they were first taken out of private houses into public patronage, has always been connected with convivial life. The number of societies subsisting throughout the United Kingdom in which they still extend pleasure, sociality, and a love of the art, would, if presented to us in a series, create surprise, and show the peculiar service rendered to musical progress through compositions of this order. For there must always be some medium through which the lovers of harmony, who have not time to gain the necessary confidence or command in any branch of instrumental skill, may yet gratify themselves at little cost of time, or of laborious application. And the singer whose ear permits him to take in all that is done by others, as well as to support his own part in time and tune, is commonly a more advanced and useful musician, than the instrumentalist who rests contented with an indifferent success.

Every successive season brings us changes in the music of London, and sometimes of great importance. The chorus at the New Philharmonic Society has introduced such a variety of interesting effects and new combinations, as few who know only the old tracks of the chorus would readily believe. Through contrasts of voices, through using voices of the same character in many parts, and a new method of accompanying a solo with the subdued tones of singers, the hearer has been surprised and delighted. The capacity of a large body of intelligent and cultivated singers to produce new effects, affords a fine field for exploration and discovery. We seemed to have experimented every thing in this department, while composers viewed music as an imitative art in which each was bound to form himself on a model, and exhibit what had been done before with a slight

difference. Such a timid progression as this left the musical wants of the time quite unsatisfied.

But composers themselves, except some few of the chief, are as little settled in public opinion as their works; and no one who labours for fame can hope for content unless ready to sacrifice all that he has done for the general advancement of the art. How little have the Italians of the last century been rewarded in public opinion for their great and eminent services to music! It was surprising to us to turn over at a late sale the MSS. of their learned compositions which formerly belonged to the library of our old Royal Academy of Music, and were, we believe, collected by Dr. Pepusch. Dr. Boyce said that Handel owed much to Colonna, and he might have added to Clari, and Purcell, and Croft:

Our English vocal composers, whose names are getting paler in the distance of history, have not lived in vain if their works have found new channels of progress, and now circulate among audiences and performers more numerous, than the authors contemplated. Singing is our first school of music, and the best writers have borne testimony to the superior tone of the English choir. The future prosperity of the art in this country depends much on this branch of practice, as it constantly enlarges the circle of the friends of music.

Conclusion.

THE CONCERT SEASON.

WE have now arrived at a point in the year at which what is called "The Concert Season" may be considered over. It will not, therefore, be altogether unprofitable to glance at its character and probable influence on musical interests and prospects.

For some years it has been the practice, and not without reason, even by our best musicians, to lament that which may in some degree be considered the decline of the musical cause, and, as a consequence, the diminution of their incomes—for certainly no art can be said to flourish while its professors are neglected or positively underpaid. Annual concerts have been found unprofitable speculations; classical performances have failed to be remunerative—popular concerts have almost become a byword—a national opera has been certainly consigned to oblivion, and even the greatest foreign lyrical establishment has involved its manager in ruin.

Yet amidst all this discouragement we have had during the present season some of the most gratifying proofs that the spirit of our native musicians is not altogether broken; compositions by our countrymen have been brought before the public, of a character higher than which no nation can boast—classical pianoforte, and other instrumental works, the effect of which, if it be not to put money into the pockets of their authors, must be to enhance their reputation and add lustre to the art they profess. In making these remarks, we should be doing less than our duty did we not specifically direct attention to the series of classical entertainments recently given by Mr. Sterndale Bennett, by Mr. Brinley Richards, by Mr. Neate,

by Mr. G. Kiallmark, and by Mr. Aguilar. In the compositions by each of these gentlemen, no less than in their performance, may be discovered some of the highest and best specimens of the class to which they belong, and we hope the time is not far distant when merits of such artists shall be acknowledged not only by the critical and the musically educated, but by the testimony of universal and popular appreciation.

While referring to this subject, we ought also to record the successful termination of a series of concerts given by what has been called "The New Philharmonic Society," an institution which rather suddenly started into existence in the spring of the present year. Although the native compositions brought into public notice by this society have not been transcendently successful, yet enough has been done to hold out a hope that in coming years the native musician will sometimes find a receptacle for his works, from which they may have a chance of emerging, stamped with the mintmark of public favour and critical approbation.

Another gratifying circumstance presents itself to our recollection, in the promised production of two new oratorios, by Englishmen, at the approaching Norwich Festival—Mr. Pierson's *Jerusalem*, and Dr. Bexfield's *Israel Restored*, in regard to both of which we have received very flattering accounts.

In reviewing, therefore, the past musical season, although we believe, in a pecuniary point of view it has proved nothing short of a positive failure, we have still the pleasing reflection that some good has been achieved for music, as an art, and we sincerely hope that the position so justly assumed by those who in perpetuating it, have had to bear pecuniary loss, will be firmly maintained, and also produce a more satisfactory result hereafter.

VERNON.

THE ANNUAL MEETING OF CHARITY CHILDREN, AT SAINT PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

[An article under this head, from an esteemed contributor, is in type, but at the last moment press of other matter has obliged us to defer it until our next.]

Correspondence.

To the Editor of the "Musical Times."

DEAR SIR.—An item for your next Musical paper:—

Lowell Mason, Esq., of Boston, U.S., has purchased the Valuable Library of Rinck, the late celebrated German Composer, and it is now *en route* for Boston, U.S.

The Treasure consists of—

1st.—Various works on the History, Biography, and General Literature of Music; including Sets of the various Musical Periodicals of Germany during the last 50 years.

2nd.—Theoretical works:—Very Extensive Collection, indeed all the books on the Science of Music which have been published in Germany.

3rd.—Books of Church Music, Masses, Motetts, &c., with many old and valuable books of Chorals, from the 16th Century down to the present time.

4th.—Organ Music:—An Extensive Collection by German Writers.

5th.—Scores of Operas and other vocal works, especially of the older German School.

6th.—Very many Educational Works, Singing Schools, School Song Books, &c.

7th.—Much Manuscript Music, including a Collection